THE DANGER OF INTRODUCING YELLOW FEVER INTO ASIA WHEN THE PANAMA CANAL IS OPENED.

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THE DANGER OF INTRODUCING YELLOW FEVER INTO ASIA WHEN THE PANAMA CANAL IS OPENED.

AT the Epidemiological Society on February 25th, Dr. Patrick Manson, C.M.G., F.R.S., LL.D., read a paper on the danger of introducing yellow fever to the Asiatic countries on the Pacific littoral, when the Central American Canal permits of direct steamship traffic between the West Indies and the Asiatic continent.

Dr. Manson pointed out that by this route ships would travel along a track which would be wholly within the tropics, and whilst the temperature would prove favourable to the prevalence of yellow fever during the voyage, it would also not be inimical to the Stegomyia fasciata, the mosquito by which yellow fever is conveyed to man. Recent researches have shown that the Stegomyia is capable of living and of conveying infection for some fifty or sixty days, and as the voyage between Panama and, say, Manila or Hong Kong would occupy not more than thirty days at most, the danger of introducing yellow fever into Asia by this channel is no fanciful theory but a question of practical hygiene. It is needless to point out the magnitude of such a possible calamity, and the urgency of inducing the governments concerned to deal with the question in a practical manner.

Dr. Manson's views were endorsed by Dr. Nuttall, of Cambridge; Dr. Strong, of the United States Laboratories in Manila; Dr. Sambon; Dr G. C. Low, Superintendent of the London School of Tropical Medicine; Dr. Henderson, late of Shanghai; Sir William Kynsey, Professor W. J. Simpson, Inspector-General Turnbull, Sir Francis Lovell, Dr. Fremantle, Dr. Farrar and Mr. Cantlie; and by the unanimous vote of the meeting it was agreed to take steps to bring the matter before the authorities in a practical form. Several of the speakers brought forward incontestible arguments as to the extreme danger likely to accrue from the introduction of yellow fever into the densely populated and insanitary cities of China. That the disease would be limited to the Chinese coast towns there is no probability. The frequent intercourse between China and Japan, between China and the Malay Peninsula, India, and the islands of the Archipelago and Australia, would open up a pathway of infection and the certainty of the prevalence of a scourge which it is fearful to contemplate. Dr. Manson advocated conjoined action by the several countries likely to be affected by this question, and especially recommended the United States and British Governments — the countries chiefly interested—to take steps to grapple with a danger which all are agreed is imminent. Many incontrovertible facts were brought forward by several of the speakers in support of the probability of Dr. Manson's contention, especially by Drs. Nuttall, Strong and Sambon; and it was felt that the matter was one of vital importance to the peoples concerned and to the vast trade interests held by Great Britain in the Far East.

It is interesting also to note that on December 15th, 1902, Dr. J. C. Thomson drew attention to

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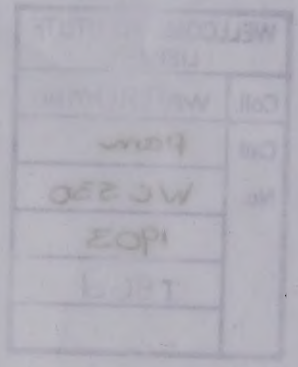

the danger of the introduction of yellow fever into China. In the course of his remarks in a lecture on the mosquito and malaria, Dr. Thomson said: "What he desired to point out was, that if yellow fever should visit Hong Kong, we have a mosquito swarming in the colony which can cause it to become epidemic. We are apt to think of yellow fever as the scourge of the far-away West Indies and Central America, and not to be reckoned with here." Dr. Thomson then mentioned the forthcoming inauguration of a freight and passenger service between Hong Kong and the Mexican ports; and said that from March 1st Hong Kong will be in direct communication with one of the great endemic centres of yellow fever, and we may any day thereafter have yellow fever landed on our shores. "And we have the appropriate Culex ready to carry it from man to man, a mosquito which from its day-feeding habits is more difficult to reckon with than Anopheles."

Dr. Sambon, in the course of his remarks at the Epidemiological Society's meeting, drew attention to the matter referred to by Dr. Thomson, and it is evident that all thoughtful medical men view with concern the establishment of unrestricted direct communication between Central America and the Far East.